

The Rock Challenge Phenomenon: A Cross-cultural Study into the Effects of Using Arts Projects to Foster the Growth of Self-esteem, Resilience, and Creativity in Children.

ロックチャレンジ現象
—子どもの自尊感情、自己回復力と創造性育成のための
芸術活動の効果に関する比較文化的研究—

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ABSTRACT

The *Rock Challenge* (RC)¹ is a dance, drama, music, and design spectacular. It originated in Australia in 1980 as the *Rock 'n Roll Eisteddfod*. In 1988, after new leadership and direction, it updated its Australian mission and name to the *Rock Eisteddfod Challenge* (REC)². In 1994, it expanded internationally to become the *Global Rock Challenge* (GRC)³, operating in up to 9 countries (Australia, United Kingdom, New Zealand, United States, Germany, Japan, South Africa, Dubai, Denmark), and grew laterally to offer *J-Rock* (Elementary school-age), *RC Raw* (Dance focus), and *Croc Festival* (Indigenous/Outback) events. It has been recognized as a unique arts and student health program by the WHO⁴ and UNESCO⁵. Over 1.5 million school students have been brought onto the stage. Globally, there is no similar activity.

In Japan, eight fully-sponsored *Rock Challenge Japan* (RCJ)⁶ events were held - three with Embassy support (Australia & United Kingdom Missions) and seven with Foundation support (Australia-Japan Foundation, Daiwa Anglo-Japan Foundation, Wave2000 Foundation, Refugees International Japan, Association for Japan-US Community Exchanges, The Australia Society, Global Community Press). These events engaged 1900 children and 60 schools from 2006 to 2016. Each year, interviews and surveys were conducted with students, school communities, sponsors, and governments to evaluate the results.

This paper is a report on a longitudinal study by its Japan producer (a RC producer since 1982) conducted over the ten-year period of the RCJ program. It defines key concepts used in the RC program such as arts, creativity, resilience, and self-esteem; describes the RC health-mission, method, and organization; discusses the approach, obstacles, and counterstrategies used to introduce the RC program into Japanese schools; provides an overview of key children's health/social issues, and merits for School RC involvement; and examines cross-cultural research results for the RC as a prevention/intervention program.

"In my 30 or 40 years of experience of combating drug abuse or alcohol abuse or tobacco misuse this is by far the most effective preventative action I have come across, one of the very few preventative activities to have a proven record of being successful. And I think anybody who considers these problems important in the world and has the possibility and the means to make a contribution should seriously consider supporting the Rock Challenge."

Hans Emblad⁷, former Director - World Health Organization's Program on Substance Abuse. (GRC, 2006, 7:37)

¹ Rock Challenge (RC). Generic brand name for program. Known as Stage Challenge (SC) in New Zealand.

² Rock Eisteddfod Challenge (REC). Australian brand name for program. NGO (Not-for-Profit | Foundation).

³ Global Rock Challenge (GRC). Global brand name for program. NGO (Not-for-Profit | Foundation).

⁴ WHO (World Health Organization) www.who.int

⁵ UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). <https://en.unesco.org>

⁶ Rock Challenge Japan (RCJ). Japan brand name underwritten by Japan Foundations. www.rockchallenge.jp

⁷ GRC (2006, March 1). *Global Rock Challenge – Promotional Video (TV Network 10 Australia)* [Video file] Retrieved from www.rockchallenge.jp/?view=videos&lang=jp

A RC stage performance is likened to a Mini-Musical-Mime | Dance-Dramatization based on a Theme set to an 8-minute (max.) compilation soundtrack. Schools self-produce, choreograph, design sets, engineer soundtracks, create stage-lighting treatments, manufacture costumes, develop make-up treatments, co-ordinate visual recording, stage manage, and raise funds for their production. Show-day involves rehearsals, interaction, and enjoyment. In the evening, schools perform to a live audience of their peers, families, and community in a commercial event-venue supervised by industry professionals. Performances are judged by a panel of arts-industry specialists and celebrities. Audience sizes range from 500 to 10,000. But it is much more than “putting on a stage show”. It is about the journey to the stage. The RC approach is:

To use the excitement of performance and the allure of youth culture in a positive environment to inspire students to lift themselves beyond what they thought they could do.

In its conclusion, this paper poses the following challenge to schools, parent groups, education systems, and governments ... Reassess current prevention/intervention programs, and seek “new” approaches, in-line with the RC program model, by connecting character-development and health/social-development messages to youth culture through the arts to handle an “old” and chronic problem, and stem the increasing trajectory of anti-social behaviors in the young.

Categories and Subject Descriptors: child development; education and the arts; children and the arts; cross-cultural educational research; creative skills development; communication skills.
General Terms & Key Words: self-esteem; resilience; creativity; health; life-skills; anti-social behavior; substance abuse; bullying; violence; avolition; truancy; social withdrawal.
Additional Keywords and Phrases: guidance and counselling; cognitive behavior therapy; disobedience and defiance; intervention and prevention; child obesity and addictions.

PREAMBLE

In September 2019, the GRC announced the closure of its final country program (RC United Kingdom) citing insufficient funding to stage the event. After 39 years of RC events across the globe, the reduction in investments by government bodies, sponsors, and media; rising costs of mounting events in large venues; maintaining the GRC organization; and general fund-raising fatigue by the various GRC producers, this program will not continue from 2020.

While the core purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of the RC program on children, the reality is that bills must be paid for programs such as this to be sustained. Over the 10 years of RC Japan’s life, approximately \$1,000,000 was raised to fund event-hall rental fees, sound/lighting/stage crews, venue equipment fees, insurance and clearance fees, schools training, transportation, promotion and marketing, team salaries, and office administration.

With respect to RC Japan, only individuals, private companies, independent foundations, and foreign governments contributed to the local program. While the MEXT became aware of the RCJ program via embassy and foundation representations - even issuing a statement in November 2011 to schools encouraging participation - it fell short of any direct investment. OECD statistics⁸ cite Japanese Government investment in education as a %-GDP as the lowest of its 34 member-nations.

⁸ OECD Education at a Glance: Japan. (2018). Retrieved from www.oecd.emb-japan.go.jp/files/000398873.pdf

DEFINING ‘ART, THE ARTS, & ARTS EDUCATION’

Award-winning Broadway, film, and television actress/director Phylicia Rashad⁹, who has performed in front of countless-millions on stage and screen, is an Alumni Trustee at Howard University¹⁰, Chair in Theatre at Fordham University¹¹, and guest lecturer in theatre studies at the Julliard School and Carnegie Mellon University in the USA. Her observation of the roots of human expression reminds us of the intrinsic importance of the arts in all of us (Figure 1.).



The Oxford Dictionary¹² defines “Art” as:

The expression or application of human creative skill and imagination ... producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.

It further defines “The Arts” as:

The various branches of creative activity, such as painting, music, literature, and dance.

In the schools’ context, these subjects are mostly grouped into “fields of arts” or have arts integrated across all subjects in the curriculum.

Figure 1: *Before a child speaks*¹³ ~ Phylicia Rashad

The “Fields of Arts” is the most common form of subject-grouping in schools – primarily for administrative/organizational reasons. And as a benchmark for discussion in this paper, the following four fields, with their accompanying subdivisions, will be referred to as the RC program draws from them all. Schools offer some/all depending on budget/facilities/staffing:

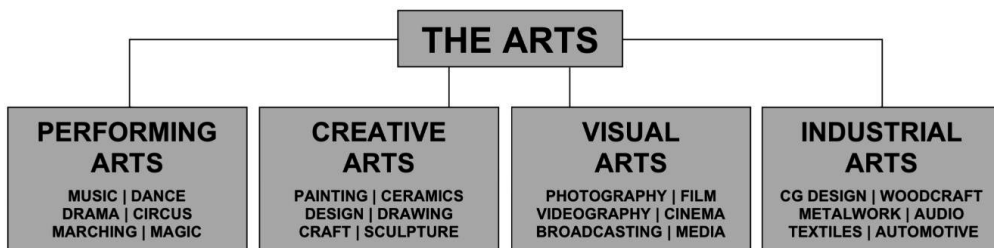


Figure 2: The Arts subsets - general guide. Schools may offer many as extra-curricula/student-club activities.

⁹ Phylicia Rashad. Profile (n.d.) IMDb. Retrieved from www.imdb.com/name/nm0711118/

¹⁰ Office of the Secretary, Howard University. (2013). *Phylicia Rashad. Alumni Trustee*. Retrieved from www.howard.edu/secretary/trustees/PhyliciaRashad.htm

¹¹ Fordham News. (2011, October 3). *Denzel Washington Endows Fordham Theatre Chair, Scholarship*. Retrieved from <https://news.fordham.edu/inside-fordham/denzel-washington-endows-fordham-theatre-chair-scholarship/>

¹² Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford University Press (OUD)) is the principal dictionary of the English language. Retrieved from www.oed.com

¹³ Educate with the Heart. (2019, July 20). In *Facebook* [Fan page]. Retrieved from <https://facebook.com/educatetheheart/>

DEFINING ‘CREATIVE’ & ‘CREATIVITY’

While the arts “sub-divisions” and their “subset” of subjects are broadly understood and acknowledged globally, the words **creative** and **creativity** often pose issues to education departments such as: defining what = “creative”; dealing with the conflict of “subjective vs objective” judgement; how to teach “creativity”; and how to empirically measure “creativity”. Referring once again to the Oxford Dictionary (Ibid.) for a simple definition of creativity:

The use of imagination or original ideas to create something; inventiveness.

Robert Franken (1982)¹⁴, a researcher, author, and professor in applied psychology, defined creativity as “the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others”. He identified three reasons **why people are motivated to be creative**:

- The need for novel, varied, and complex stimulation
- The need to communicate ideas and values
- The need to solve problems

He argued that in order to be creative, a person needs to be able to “view things in new ways or from a different perspective and be able to generate new possibilities or new alternatives”. Tests of creativity measure not only the number of alternatives people can generate but the **uniqueness of those alternatives**. He stated that:

The ability to generate alternatives or to see things uniquely does not occur by chance. It is linked to other, more fundamental qualities of thinking, such as flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity or unpredictability, and the enjoyment of things here-to-fore unknown.

Robert Weisberg (1993)¹⁵, a professor of psychology and seminal researcher in cognition, creativity, cognition of thought, developmental psychology et al., suggests that: "creative" refers to **novel products of value**, as in "The airplane was a creative invention" or to the **person who produces the work**, as in "Picasso was creative." He connects these core actions of inventing and producing to the real-world application of creativity: the **capacity to produce creative works**, as in "How can we foster our employees' creativity?" and to the **active ability to generate creative works**, as in "Creativity requires hard work."

All who study creativity agree that for something to be creative, it is not enough for it to be novel. It must have value or be appropriate to the cognitive demands of the situation.

In Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997)¹⁶, a professor and former chairman of the Department of Psychology at the University of Chicago, has devoted his life to studying what brings holistic fulfilment to people. He is regarded as the world's leading researcher on positive psychology and flow theory. He defines creativity thus:

¹⁴ Franken, R. E. (1982). *Human motivation*. Monterey, CA: Cole Publishing Co.

¹⁵ Weisberg, R. W. (1993). *Creativity - Beyond the myth of genius*. New York.

¹⁶ Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997). *Creativity - Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. Harper Collins. NY.

Creativity is any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain, or that transforms an existing domain into a new one ... What counts is whether the novelty he or she produces is accepted for inclusion in the domain.

Csikszentmihalyi's research also listed and described the **ways creativity is commonly used**:

- Persons who express unusual thoughts, and who are interesting and stimulating - in short, people who appear to be unusually bright.
- People who experience the world in novel/original ways; who are personally creative; whose perceptions are fresh; whose judgements are insightful; who may make important discoveries only they know about.
- Individuals who have changed our culture in some important way. Because their achievements are, by definition, public, it is easier to write about them. (eg. Da Vinci, Edison, Picasso, Einstein, etc).

Suggested a **systems-model of creativity**:

- Creative domain, which is nested in culture - the symbolic knowledge shared by a particular society or by humanity as a whole (eg., visual arts).
- Specific field, which includes all the gatekeepers of the domain (eg. art critics, art teachers, curators of museums, etc.).
- Individual person, using the symbols of the given domain (ie, music, engineering, etc) has a new idea or sees a new pattern, and this novelty is selected by the appropriate field for inclusion into the relevant domain.

And he delineates the **characteristics of a creative personality**:

- Creative individuals have a great deal of energy, but they are also often quiet and at rest.
- Creative individuals tend to be smart, yet also naive at the same time.
- Creative individuals have a combination of playfulness and discipline, or responsibility and irresponsibility.
- Creative individuals alternate between imagination/fantasy at one end, and rooted sense of reality at the other.
- Creative people seem to harbor opposite tendencies on the continuum between extroversion and introversion.
- Creative individuals are also remarkable humble and proud at the same time.
- Creative individuals to a certain extent escape rigid gender role stereotyping and tend toward androgyny.
- Generally, creative people are thought to be rebellious and independent.
- Most creative persons are very passionate about their work yet can be extremely objective about it as well.
- The openness/sensitivity of creative individuals exposes them to suffering pain and a great deal of enjoyment.

Combined, each of his research findings above suggest a synergy between novel/originality, character-trait, capacity/motivation to “produce”, and contextual factors that act together to form a template to define a “creative” person.

The RC program incorporates “creativity” into its mantra to give children the opportunity to develop a novel/original product of artistic value; to inspire them to develop their talents/character; to motivate them to aim higher than they thought they could achieve; and to position them in a professional performance context that ordinarily they could not afford to source. The RC program does not define its success by the “final evening” event itself, but by the positive “journey” of the student in the many months prior to the performance.

DEFINING ‘RESILIENCE’ & ‘SELF-ESTEEM’

Richardson (1995)¹⁷ defined **resilience** as "the process and experience of adapting to disruptive, opportunistic, stressful, challenging, or informative life-prompts in a way that provides the individual with more protective and coping skills and knowledge than prior to the

¹⁷ Richardson, G.E. (1995). *The Resiliency Training Manual*. C. Brown Communications. USA.

disruption”. Specific RC research conducted by Grunstein & Nutbeam (2007)¹⁸ from the University of Sydney identified five resiliency factors - **sense of identity, sense of belonging, sense of purpose, problem solving skills, and social competence.**

In other research, Richardson (2002)¹⁹ provides a visual resiliency model (Figure 3.) to demonstrate the shift from comfort-zone (biopsychospiritual homeostasis) through disruption (internal or external stressors) to response (reintegration) ie. a movement from pre-adversity to adversity to post-adversity. The “reintegration” stage is the turning-point for resilience (growth) or rebound (stasis) or dysfunction (decay).

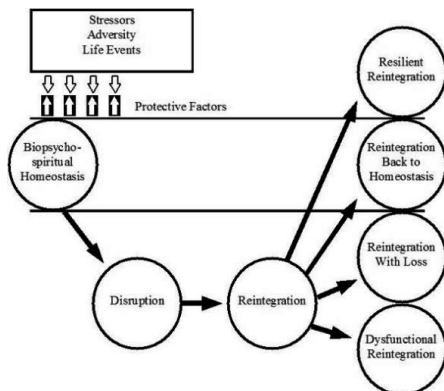


Figure 3. Richardson's resiliency model.

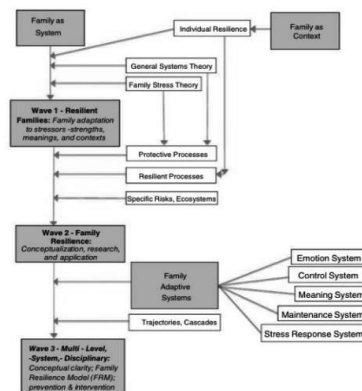


Figure 4. Family Resilience - Three Waves.

It is at this reintegration juncture that the capacity to cope, regain (or maintain) mental health, and the ability to adapt and go forward positively is critical. For children, and in the specific context of this paper, RC children, the two main spheres of their lives revolve around family and school. The types of stresses (internal and external) they experience will be covered later in this paper. However, when a child is at this reintegration turning point, the primary-carer (family) and secondary-carer (school) need the emotional tools to effect or assist with recovery.

In Henry, C.S., Harrist, A., & Morris, A. (2015)²⁰, their research at Oklahoma State University (Department of Human Development and Family Science) expressed the resilience model for the primary-carer (family) in the form of three “waves”. They re-evaluated the traditional methods practitioners and researchers used to discuss resilient family and family resilience by adding a “third wave” (Figure 4.). **Wave 1** (identifying/coping) relied on inherent internal resources of family-strengths to cope and adapt with stresses. **Wave 2** (responding/adapting) involved traditional external systems of counselling-support to complement family coping processes. Their proposed additional **Wave 3** (prevention and intervention) would help families handle stressors and develop better resilience through a more diversified and multi-faceted approach. The secondary-carer (school) has a limited but important role in support of family resilience too. While schools may hesitate to insert themselves directly in “Wave 1” or “Wave 2” resilience processes (family privacy breach), they do have the opportunity to integrate progressive protection and intervention programs into their curriculums.

¹⁸ Grunstein, R. & Nutbeam, D. (2007). The impact of participation in the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge on adolescent resiliency and health behaviours. In *Health Education*, 107 (3): 261-275.

¹⁹ Richardson, G.E. (2002). The metatheory of resilience and resiliency. In *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, (58), 307-321.

²⁰ Henry, C.S., Harrist, A., & Morris, A. (2015 February). Family resilience: Moving into the third wave. In *Family Relations*, (64), 22-33.

Self-esteem – the subjective evaluation of one’s self – is a companion to resilience. A **positive sense of one’s own worth** is a critical factor for a child to be able to deal with stress. The ramifications of negative or low self-worth/self-regard mean that children become susceptible to anti-social activities or self-harm. Relatively recent research has surfaced that indicates self-esteem is established as young as five years of age. Research by Cvencek, Greenwald, and Meltzoff (2016)²¹ at the Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences, University of Washington, found self-esteem played a critical role in developing a child’s social identity. A key finding was that implicit self-esteem serves an identity-maintenance function, even in preschoolers.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)²² is a respected assessment tool, known for its reliability and validity as a measure of self-esteem. It is used by practitioners for assessing children (adolescents)-to-adults. The scale range, from 0-30, and provides a measurement of self-worth. Scores of 15-25 are considered within normal range, and scores <15 suggest low self-esteem. Rosenberg (1965)²³ had conducted tests on over 5000 high school students drawn from a mix of nationalities, religions, and socio-economic groups to refine his test procedure. Forty years later, Schmitt & Allik (2005)²⁴ used this scale successfully in cross-cultural studies in across 53 nations.

The RC program has conducted regular research to determine the “RC effect” of its programs using a range of measuring instruments such as RSES, observation/interview, and surveys. This has been both an ongoing educational self-audit of its performance, as well as a validation for parents, school communities, sponsors, and government of the impact of the program. Sample survey-results appear later in this paper.

Context of RC keyword definitions ... The GRC’s core mission in all countries has been to motivate and inspire children to live healthy, fruitful lives - by experiencing the excitement of performance and the allure of youth culture in a positive (and spectacular) environment. In the process of involvement in this arts program, children are positioned to express their creativity (student-driven production), challenge their resilience (sustain commitment to a long-term, demanding project), and reaffirm their self-esteem (achieve a sense of personal pride and accomplishment). Its global expansion was to widen its mission to help unite children of many countries in recognizing their common humanity, their own heritage, and inspire their future. The RC events in Japan were “showcases” (promotional and training events to build product recognition and understanding), and staged as litmus-tests to gauge its suitability, acceptability, sustainability, and credibility in the local educational context, and to demonstrate the capability of Japanese children to produce student-driven shows above the standard of intra-school shows.

Since 1980/1988 (REC in Australia), and since 1994 (GRC), the RC production teams around the world have been working with young people, schools, communities, governments, and organizations to increase the awareness of youth social issues and address anti-social behaviors - using the arts as the conduit and the RC as an intervention and prevention program. The RCJ was one of the global production teams.

²¹ Cvencek, D., Greenwald, A. & Meltzoff, A. (2016 January). Implicit measures for preschool children confirm self-esteem’s role in maintaining a balanced identity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. (62), 50-57.

²² Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale*. Retrieved from <https://www.norton.com/college/psych/psychsci/media/rosenberg.htm>

²³ Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

²⁴ Schmitt, D.P., & Allik, J. (2005). Simultaneous administration of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in 53 Nations: Exploring the universal and culture-specific features of global self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, (89), 623-642.

A ROCK CHALLENGE (RC) PERFORMANCE

A Rock Challenge (RC) performance is a 5~8minute (max.) music-dance-dramatization to an original theme. The performance duration allows for contemporary-music medleys or song compilations to augment the story telling. Only pre-recorded music (soundtrack) and sound-effects (audio-insertions) are allowed (no live sounds permitted). Performance themes must be an original work (eg. source-ideas could be cultural, film-inspired, fiction, historical, people, current-issues, pure-entertainment). The stage performance is a choreographed interpretation of the theme. Costumes, sets, and props are expected to complement the stage performance. A student backstage-crew have 4minutes to both set/strike the stage for their school's act. Lighting-cues are designed-and-called by student representatives from the performing school. Performances are videoed with camera-cues called by student representatives from the performing school. The following is a full act sample performance from the Rock Challenge Japan (RCJ) and can be viewed on the VIMEO link in listed in the footnote below (25).



Figure 5. AUSTRIAN BALLETSCHOOL - ROCK CHALLENGE JAPAN 2012 “Wood Spirits”²⁵

THEME: “WOOD SPIRITS”. Japanese Woods are as mystical as they are majestic. They inspire countless stories in Japanese as well as ours unfolding as a powerful ballet. Our story: The “Wood Spirits” gather in the Japanese Woods and are looking for anybody who is lost in them. When a young man enters the woods, they try to scare him away. But when their queen “Snow Princess YUKI ONNA” sees this young man, she decides to let him live and dances with him instead. Finally, all the other “Wood Spirits” join this dance too.

BACKGROUND OF PERFORMANCE GROUP: The Austrian Ballet School is a community school for ages 9 ~ 19 and is Japan's first full scholarship ballet academy aimed at raising professional classical dancers. Since being founded in 2009, more than 2000 students have joined the English National Ballet, Canadian National Ballet, and as soloists to the Czech Theater. On February 3, 2012, the ABS was a dance-team of fourteen, and one of twelve schools that performed at the Rock Challenge Japan event staged at Shinjuku Bunka Center Hall, Tokyo.

²⁵ Rock Challenge Japan 2012. [VIMEO]. *Wood Spirits*. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/RCJ2012WoodSpirits>



Figure 6. Images from Rock Challenge Japan 2012 – Shinjuku Bunka Center, Tokyo. (Ibid).

Photos (Figure 6.) are a selection of 4 schools of the 60 involved in the RCJ 2008 (Figures 7. ~ 9.) of the 8 events held between 2006 and 2016. The RCJ, as with all GRC events, is open to any child of school age - elementary, high, community school, or educational organization - including private and public schools, national and international schools, dance or martial arts schools, single-gender or co-ed schools, and touring overseas schools. The events were fully sponsored with no entry-fee for schools; free entry for audiences; free event photographs and videos for all schools; free programs for audience and schools; free choreography support for schools requiring help; and free regular visits and guidance to all schools by the RCJ Team.



Figure 7. RCJ 2012 Program Cover Figure 8. 「楽」"Raku" RCJ Character Figure 9. RCJ Photo/Video Service

ROCK CHALLENGE JAPAN: STAGE-EVENT HISTORY 2006 ~ 2016

EVENT	"Be Your Best" Rock Challenge Japan – DEC 8, 2006
VENUE	Fuchu No Mori Hall - Fuchu City,
ATTENDEES	Students: 224 Schools (Elementary & High & Abroad High Schools): 7 Audience: 500+
PROJECT	12-month Duration RC-J Team: 32
THEME	Part of the ... Year of Exchange Australia-Japan 2006
EVENT	Rock Challenge Japan – JUL 15 & 16, 2008
VENUE	Asahi Hall – Yurakucho, Tokyo,
ATTENDEES	Students: 250+ Schools (Elementary & High & Abroad High Schools): 9 Audience: 700+
PROJECT	16-month Duration RC-J Team: 40
THEME	Part of the ... UK-JPN 2008 60-Year Celebration
EVENT	Rock Challenge Japan – NOV 19, 2009
VENUE	Kannai Hall - Yokohama, Kanagawa
ATTENDEES	Students: 276 Schools (Elementary & High & Abroad High Schools): 10 Audience: 800+
PROJECT	12-month Duration RC-J Team: 38
THEME	Celebrating ... 30 Years of Global Rock Challenge
EVENT	Rock Challenge Japan – NOV 22, 2010
VENUE	Kannai Hall - Yokohama, Kanagawa
ATTENDEES	Students: 250+ Schools (Elementary & High Schools): 11 Audience: 800+
PROJECT	12-month Duration RC-J Team: 37
THEME	Thanksgiving Celebration - Children of All Cultures
EVENT	Rock Challenge Japan – FEB 3, 2012
VENUE	Shinjuku Bunka Center - Shinjuku, Tokyo
ATTENDEES	Students: 302 Schools (Elementary & High & Abroad High Schools): 12 Audience: 900+
PROJECT	8-month Duration RC-J Team: 38
THEME	Tribute to Tohoku Students - Healing Through The Arts
EVENT	Rock Challenge Japan – MAY 18, 2013
VENUE	Columbia International School Hall - Tokorozawa, Saitama
ATTENDEES	Students: 100+ Schools (Elementary & High Schools): 5 Audience: 100+
PROJECT	3-month Duration RC-J Team: 15
THEME	The Global Village Students - International School Festival
EVENT	Rock Challenge Japan – OCT 15, 2014
VENUE	Hitachi Systems Hall - Sendai, Miyagi
ATTENDEES	Students: 350+ Schools (Elementary & High Schools): 3 Audience: 50+
PROJECT	3-month Duration RC-J Team: 7
THEME	For the Children of Ishinomaki - Project Tohoku Workshop
EVENT	Rock Challenge Japan – OCT 18, 2015
VENUE	National Olympic Centre Hall - Yoyogi, Tokyo
ATTENDEES	Students: 150+ Schools (High+ Post-High Schools): 10 Audience: 500+
PROJECT	3-month Duration RC-J Team: 2
THEME	Cross-Cultural Celebration – Part Of the 5th Red-White Singing Festival

Figure 10. RCJ Showcase Events²⁶

The RCJ varied from the standard RC model of operations in that it incorporated other activities into its mission (acts were presented at corporate functions, embassy events, or government promotions). It used a “no cost” approach (no joining fees, no training fees, free tickets, free programs, free photos, free videos) rather than a “user pays” system. This was due to its need to recruit schools (Figure 10.) who had little/no budget available for extra-curricula projects; encourage audience attendance at child-driven events; and promote/showcase the RC concept.

²⁶ *Rock Challenge Japan*. [Homepage]. Retrieved from <http://www.rockchallenge.jp>

RCJ Performance rules followed the GRC model (Figure 11.). These guidelines were to ensure that: a single RC Show could include up to 15 Schools within a 3-hour event; the core performance theme of a “narrative” or “concept” was maintained; the school set designers and backstage crews could consider and work to set-sizes/time-setting parameters; there was a smooth and safe transition between acts for the evening to flow.

①	MINI-MUSICAL-MIME	DRAMA + DANCE + MUSIC + MIME, THE ACT TELLS A STORY
②	FULL PROFESSIONAL STAGE + CREW	PRO-LIGHTING RIG, PRO-SOUND, STAGE BATTERNS ETC
③	4 MINUTES STAGE SETTING TIME	MAXIMUM TIME LIMIT
④	8 MINUTE ACT DURATION	MINIMUM DURATION = 5 MINUTES
⑤	4 MINUTES SETS STRIKING TIME	MAXIMUM TIME LIMIT
⑥	100 STUDENTS ON STAGE	MAXIMUM = 120 RECOMMENDED-MINIMUM = 20
⑦	20 BACKSTAGE CREW	MAXIMUM = 20 INCL. STAFF - NOT INCL. MAKE-UP/COSTUME TEAM
⑧	1 STUDENT PRODUCER	STUDENT 'MC' EXPLAINS CONCEPT TO THE AUDIENCE
⑨	BACKGROUND MUSIC & RECORDED SFX	NOT A 'LIVE' MUSIC PERFORMANCE + NO 'LIVE' SOUNDS
⑩	SOUNDTRACKS (CONTEMPORARY)	RECOMMENDED MINIMUM = 3. MAXIMUM = 8 + SFX
①	ミニ・ミュージカル	劇+ダンス+音楽+マイムを使ってストーリーを作る
②	プロの舞台スタッフ	プロの照明装置、音響、パト
③	舞台のセット時間	4分以内
④	パフォーマンス時間	5分以上8分以内
⑤	舞台の片付け時間	4分以内
⑥	約100人の生徒パフォーマンス	最大120人 最小20人程度が望ましい
⑦	20人の裏方(生徒)	最大20人(先生を含む)
⑧	舞台監督(生徒)	観客に舞台のパフォーマンスのテーマを説明する生徒代表者
⑨	事前に録音した音源を使用	生の音ではなく事前に録音しておくこと
⑩	サウンド・トラック(現代のもの)	3曲程度が望ましいが最大8曲まで可能

Figure 11. RCJ English & Japanese Performance Parameters²⁷

RCJ Judging criteria varied from other RC models, as no “1st Place” was awarded. Instead, a group of categories (Figure 12.) for the judges to draw from became the model. Live (positive) comments after each individual performance were also provided, as with all RC events.

MOST ENTERTAINING AWARD	BEST DANCE AWARD	BEST STORY AWARD	FULL-SCHOOL AWARD
BEST COSTUME/MAKE-UP AWARD	BEST ACTION AWARD	BEST COMEDY AWARD	BEST DESIGN AWARD
LONG-DISTANCE AWARD	AUDIENCE FAVOURITE	BEST CONCEPT AWARD	HIGH ENERGY AWARD
THE "WOW" AWARD	BEST SOUNDTRACK AWARD	ABSOLUTELY CUTE AWARD	MOST DRAMATIC AWARD
MOST INSPIRING AWARD	STAND-OUT ACTOR	STAND-OUT DANCER	BEST SET/STAGE-DESIGN
エンターテインメント賞	ベストダンス賞	ベストストーリー賞	学校全体参加賞
ベストコスチューム・メイクアップ賞	ベストアクション賞	ベストコメディ賞	ベストデザイン賞
長距離参加賞	拍手最多賞	ベストコンセプト賞	ハイエナジー賞
「WOW」だったで賞	ベストサウンドトラック賞	最も可愛かったで賞	ドラマチック賞
刺激的だったで賞	優秀俳優賞	優秀ダンサー賞	ベストセット賞

Figure 12. RCJ English & Japanese Award Categories²⁸

The size and scale of Australian events (REC: the Origin-country of project - 1980), New Zealand events (SC: first International country to join – 1993), and United Kingdom events (RCUK: first European country to join – 1996), and South African events (RCSA, first non-Western country to join – 2005), were significantly larger than the RCJ. At its peak, Australia’s REC (Rock Eisteddfod Challenge) had 100,000 students involved per annum. New Zealand’s SC (Stage Challenge) boasted more than 50% of its schools involved. The RCUK (Rock Challenge United Kingdom), initially adopted by the UK police, and staged 49 days of events in 2016 alone. The RCSA (Rock Challenge South Africa) was held in 5 cities, involving 165

²⁷ Rock Challenge Japan Performance Parameters. [RCJ 2006 Handbook].

²⁸ Rock Challenge Japan Award Categories. [RCJ Event Programs].

elementary and high schools with more than 15,000 students in its first year. A link below to the RC YouTube Archive²⁹ (29) gives further visual insights into the standards/size of events.

With schools growing in RC experience, and new schools joining the RC, it became necessary to split the event to cater for this factor into “Open” (start-up schools) and “Premier” (long-term schools). Elementary schools also saw the value in connecting with this project, and the J-ROCK (Junior Rock Challenge) began in 2004. Also in 2004, the RC-RAW division (no sets, smaller groups, dance-focus) was introduced for schools that had limited budgets but wished to be a part of this program. And in 1998, the REC created a special event for Outback-Australia called CROC Eisteddfod Festival (for remote, rural, indigenous communities). All RC global events carry the “Say ‘No’ to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco” as a part of their intervention and prevention program. In addition, J-ROCK focused more on health/child-obesity, and the CROC event aimed to bring high-level projects into remote communities where ‘large distance’ factors and other disadvantages.

The reasons for the variance in the volume of students involved between REC | SC | RCUK | RCSA vs RCJ are many and varied and will be discussed later in this paper. In addition, the RCJ localized its intervention and prevention mission to incorporate other pressing youth-needs in Japan as well as those promoted by GRC, dispensing with an “overall winner” prize.

GLOBAL ROCK CHALLENGE (GRC) ORGANIZATION | FOUNDATION

Headquartered in Sydney, Australia, the GRC was directed by Peter Sjoquist AM, who had taken over as Executive Producer from 1988 until its closure in 2019. For his work in this field, he was awarded the Australian Centenary Medal in the 2001 Queen's New Year's Honours List - for service to Indigenous education and youth affairs and the Croc Festival. He was later awarded the A.M. (Member of the Order of Australia) in the 2004 Queen's New Year's Honours List - for his services to the visual and performing arts to youth through the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge, and through the Croc Festivals and to the remote communities. Peter was also the Producer of the Australian movie *Crocodile Dundee* (1986), Australian/USA movie *The Phantom* (1996), and was TV Broadcast Producer for *Sydney 2000 Olympic Games*.

Invited by UNESCO to be a keynote speaker in the city of Lisbon, Portugal, at the *First World Conference on Arts Education*³⁰, Peter presented the Global Rock Challenge project. (The author of this paper also assisted with the contents of the UNESCO speech). The Conference brought together 1200 participants from 97 nation-member states - education departments, experts, practitioners, teachers, and researchers in the field of arts education. The aim of the conference was to encourage participants to reflect upon and generate new thinking about the role of the arts and creativity in the social, cultural, and economic context of the 21st Century. It also aimed to create a forum for the sharing of experiences, informing of the best practices, and setting up of the very highest quality standards. A summary paper was released following the conference: UNESCO Road Map for Arts Education³¹.

²⁹ *Rock Eisteddfod Archive*. [YOUTUBE]. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/RCArchiveFootage>

³⁰ Sjoquist, P. (2006). *The Global Rock Challenge*. Paper presented in ‘Music and Dance’ at First World Conference on Arts Education. Lisbon, Portugal. (2006, March 6-9). Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/CLT/pdf/Arts_Edu_Lisbon_Programme.pdf

³¹ Road Map for Arts Education. (2006). *World Conference on Arts Education*. (26 pages). UNESCO. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/CLT/pdf/Arts_Edu_RoadMap_en.pdf

The RCJ program was established at the peak time of recognition of the GRC's performance. Members of Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) also attended the UNESCO conference, met with Peter Sjoquist, and continued discussions with the author of this paper on their return to Japan regarding the introduction and potential support of the RCJ. In 2011, MEXT released a memo to Japanese schools stating that involvement in the RCJ internationalization project should be considered by Japanese schools (Managing Director: Association for Japan-US Community Exchanges (RCJ Supporting Foundation) | former Government Finance Minister. Personal communique. November 2011).

ROCK CHALLENGE JAPAN (RCJ) ORGANIZATION | FOUNDATION SUPPORT

The RCJ base of operations was in Tokyo, with premises either funded or provided by a range of local Foundations. In addition to Australian and British government grants, the balance of funds for most years meant exhaustively pitching to corporations and small businesses for sponsorship. The RCJ Team was a mix of full-time, part-time, and volunteer staff. The GRC Headquarters also provided staffing-support at RCJ events in the initial years.

The venues for all performances were large, professional musical theatres located in Tokyo, Yokohama, and Sendai. Professional video, photography, lighting, sound, and stage crews were employed to ensure both safety and premium event standards. Four judges were used for each event - a mix of celebrities, academics, media, and entertainment industry leaders. Trophies were presented at each event by a different VIP eg. predominantly by Ambassadors or their representatives (Australia, United Kingdom, Egypt). The core purpose behind arranging such impressive venues and providing professional crews was to ensure maximum impact/excitement for the children on performance day – far beyond what they could ever experience in a traditional school environment.

RCJ TOHOKU PROJECT 2014 – ACTIVE RESEARCH

After visits to the Tohoku region in 2011, and from feedback from researchers and other NPOs operating in the disaster-struck area, it was evident that there was an urgent need to introduce proven educational/health-programs for the young in the eastern-Tohoku region - to address the longer-term impact of grief and depression and its impact on the general health and well-being of the children. In March 2013, with the assistance of the Dean of the Graduate School of Education (Tohoku University) and Dean of Education & Clinical Psychology (Mukogawa Women's University), work commenced to recruit schools and fund a RCJ dance/drama workshop and performance – which was held in Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture.

Connections to two junior high schools in Ishinomaki City were arranged (22 schools were approached by the Ishinomaki Board of Education on behalf of the RCJ), and full funding was achieved to provide a full day's training by award-winning dance-instructors, followed by a stage performance in Hitachi Systems Hall on October 15, 2014. The students and staff of Tokyo International School funded their own visit to show solidarity and friendship. A total of 350 students were provided with training, transportation, catering, programs, surveys, and a professional stage/lighting/sound/photo crew. The most genuine measure of the project's results were the expressions of pure joy on the children's faces, and best summarized in the comments from the principals of the two participating Ishinomaki schools at the end of the day:

“This event far exceeded our expectations. Our children thoroughly enjoyed the experience. We thank you and hope to see it continue from 2015.”

PROJECT OBSTACLES | COUNTERSTRATEGIES

The launch of any new educational concept is always a challenge. The launch of an educational concept for export abroad presents its own set of hurdles. The initial approach to introduce the RC program into the Japan education system was through diplomatic channels. With the support of the Australian Embassy Tokyo and Australian Education International Japan (AEI) - Australia’s educational arm of the Embassy - the inaugural RCJ event was tied to the official “Year of Exchange Australia-Japan 2006” event and attended by the Australian Ambassador and Ministers. Following this event, the Director of the AEI (Japan) made representations for the RCJ to the MEXT. In 2006, the RCJ Producer developed a strategic education-market entry plan based on the following Mind-Map³² (Figure 13).

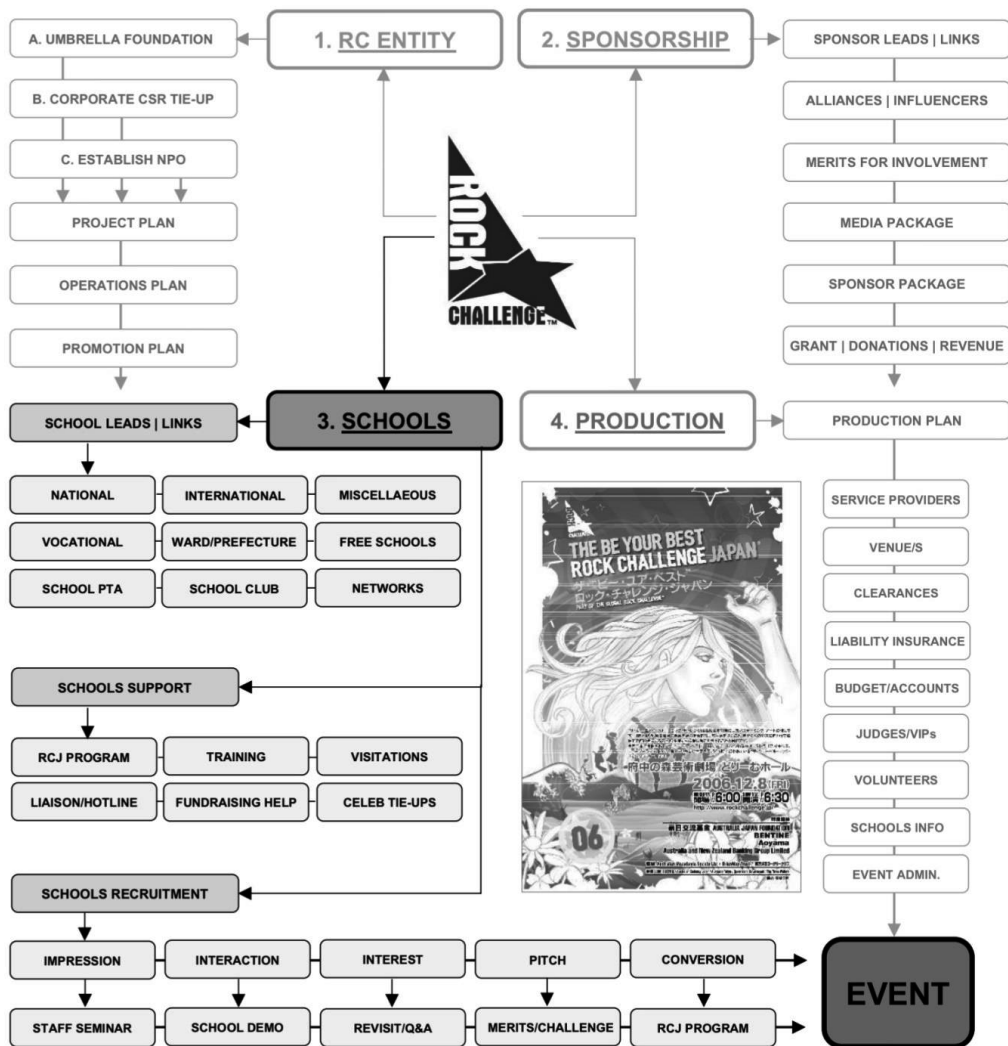


Figure 13. RC Japan 2016 Mind Map. (SCHOOLS segment **highlighted**).

³² RC Japan Mind Map: Visual overview of RCJ Producer’s Strategic Plan 2006.

The RCJ 2006 Mind Map is a strategic plan overview showing four quadrants making up the core elements for the project's development, implementation, and sustainability. The RCJ Producer would not permit the project to move forward until both the ENTITY and SPONSORSHIP aspects were fully secured. The project unrolled in the following sequence:

- 1. RC ENTITY:** Establishment of local RC Project and Implementation Plans
- 2. SPONSORSHIP:** Establishment of guaranteed Funding/Budget prior to start-up
- 3. SCHOOLS:** Engagement-strategy based on leads/links, recruit model, support structure
- 4. PRODUCTION:** Event-production Plan and Roll-out

For the purposes of this paper, the discussion-focus will remain on the **SCHOOLS** quadrant (highlighted in Figure 13. above), the obstacles faced, and counterstrategies used to engage schools to join the RCJ Program. All channels to schools were explored via Embassy links, personal networks, direct introductions to schools, or Ward/Prefectural education departments.

The initial months were spent identifying **obstacles** – fixed mind-sets and hurdles – as well as refining approaches and strategies to counter disinterest, disbelief, discouragement, or disaffection with the RC-J concept. These interactions and discussions occurred at meetings and at actual RC events abroad. Below is a selection of responses recorded from 2006:

- *“This is Japan ...”* – Response of a senior MEXT official to the presentation of the RC by Director of Australian Education International reflecting inflexibility/obstructionism.
- *“It will take 10 years to get this into schools.”* – MEXT Music official on return to Japan from the UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education where the RC was presented.
- *“Mendokusai (a burden).”* – Discussion with a teacher-group following an informal survey. Teachers stated they are overworked, and new ideas mean extra-work/no-extra-allowances.
- *“Japanese children could never do this.”* – President of a large entertainment training institute after attending the Australian REC, and underestimating Japanese student capacity.
- *“We like the idea, but our schedules and annual timetables are full.”* – Standard response from a number of principals as a polite way to reject the concept.
- *“This looks too expensive to do. Our school is poor.”* – Japan is ranked last by the OECD in GDP %-per-head-investment in education spending.
- *“You would need to start this as a new Club at a school.”* – While clubs were a potential initial conduit to enter a school, the RC is a program for the many, not just the few.
- *“Students have Juku (Cram Schools) to attend after school.”* – This illuminated the rote-learning culture prevalent in the Japanese education system and “juku-as-aftercare” issue.
- *“We have no staff trained to do this.”* – Teachers missing the point that this is child-driven project with teachers being supervisors/monitors.
- *“We have school bands and traditional dance events just like this.”* – Principals and teachers missing the connection of the Arts and RC as intervention/prevention program.

The nature and volume of excuses for non-involvement were to be expected, as school administrations and teachers generally prefer the educational status-quo. Additionally, Japanese schools tend to follow top-down directives from their Ward, Prefecture, or National education departments. All discussions recorded above were set up via networks/intermediaries.

Cold-calling, unsolicited mail, email invitations, uninvited school visits etc were not strategies employed for approaching Japanese schools. Not only are these impolite forms of contact generally, these “sales-like” approaches by strangers are rejected by educational institutes.

An exhaustive set of **counterstrategies** was created as a resource to move the RC project forward, and to address the issues discovered in the first six months of the project. These were a combination of immediate, short-term, and long-term school recruitment strategies, as it was clear that converting many Japanese schools to the RC program was to be a slow-burn project.

The following initiatives were prepared and mostly implemented during the life of the RCJ:

- **Develop MEXT Support and Involvement:** A MEXT official attended an RCJ event and recognized its potential. Develop this linkage.
- **Ward/Prefecture Education Departments:** Engage RC Embassy-countries (eg. Australia, United Kingdom, South Africa, New Zealand) to provide representation.
- **Tertiary Training Institute Collaboration:** Develop branding, promotion, and training tie-ups with arts/entertainment specialist institutes as a conduit to access schools.
- **Private Enterprise School Tie-ups:** Dance, Drama, Martial Arts School linkages as potential RC performance groups.
- **School Networking Consortium:** Assign teachers interested in supporting the RC project to be school-recruiters – assigned to different Wards or Cities.
- **Arts Certification Courses:** Short training programs for teachers on event production, dance/drama/lighting/sound provided by a certified trainer or accredited institute.
- **Seminars in Stagecraft:** Specialist trainers in stage-makeup and costume-design deliver short courses to students and teachers.
- **Professional Development Courses in The Arts:** Academic presentations in child-directed/teacher mentored learning using RC as a model.
- **Student Clubs and PTA Group Advocacy:** Grassroots approach to schools to introduce the RC via a school’s children and parents.
- **Abroad Sister Schools, Alumni RCJ Schools Linkage:** Encourage international communications or past-RCJ schools to promote the merits and appeal of joining the RCJ.
- **Internationalization:** Promote the RC to school communities as a channel for real English-language interaction and cultural exchange by connecting with International Schools
- **Incentives Approach:** Awards for RC teachers – provided by RC sponsors – to attend a RC performance abroad.
- **Influencer Visitations to Schools:** Performing Arts industry celebrities visit potential RC schools to motivate and inspire them to consider RC involvement.
- **Principal | Producer Meetings:** Private presentations of the merits and value of the RC Program either in-school or embassy location.
- **School Invitations:** Direct invitation to International schools, Private training schools, and National schools with established relationships to join RC.

Eight RC-J events and additional promotional/demonstration shows for corporate events, city festivals, or special promotional shows, proved that with continuity of effort and name-value building, school penetration was indeed possible, and that the RC product was both desirable and a good-fit for a school curriculum – particularly for the Moral Education subject. The most effective RC signup-methodology used was a “by-invitation” model. This also proved to be a suitable strategy for start-up in Japan. Resultant parent, student, and teacher testimonials also demonstrated the RC mission-fit. The Ishinomaki Board of Education’s instant positive and supportive response to promoting the RC program in its region reflected its own recognition of the RC program’s resilience/self-esteem claims. Interestingly, in 2013, Japan’s MEXT introduced “Dance” as a subject into the National Curriculum – giving the introduction of the RC into schools further curriculum relevancy.

CHILD HEALTH/SOCIAL ISSUES & ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIORS

Child health issues, as they relate to the RC, are focused on “unhealthy” life choices such as: child/teenage obesity; underage tobacco and alcohol consumption; and drug usage. Child behavioral issues, as they relate to the RC, are identified as: bullying; violence; anti-social behavior; avolition; truancy; depression; self-harm; and social withdrawal. These health and behavior traits indicate a child’s mental state and shortfalls in their self-esteem and resilience.

Children in all RC countries are impacted upon by these threats to their health and social life – from both external and internal sources. Whether self, siblings, parents, peers, extended family, friendship groups, school, social/cultural/political environment, they face a ream of challenges. The determining factor of whether they can handle these threats or not, is their level of self-esteem and resilience – their pride in their own self-worth and their ability to resist/rebound.

The RC harnesses the arts and the positive energy/aspects of youth culture as an intervention and prevention strategy. The program aims to provide a cure rather than just treat the symptoms – and that is to strengthen the child’s mind and spirit to cope and excel. The pathway RC chose was to develop good mental health in children and adolescents through enhancing their self-esteem, capacity for resilience, and inspiring their creative thinking capability.

The UNESCO (2019)³³ report on mental health recognises how crucial this aspect is in a child’s wellbeing but particularly at adolescence:

Adolescence is a critical and formative period in which individuals begin their transition from childhood to adulthood. Ensuring that adolescents are fully supported in all facets of life is critical for fostering this transition and laying the foundation for a healthy and productive remainder of their lives.

The WHO (2019)³⁴ International Youth Day theme was “Transforming Education”. The core summary of its report following this event echoed the 39-year mission of the RC:

Education is also pivotal to good health, gender equality, and peace and security ... school attendance in itself is associated with reduced mortality in boys and girls, in addition to other benefits; school ethos is associated with benefits in a number of health areas including violence and drug use, and attendance at school increases the likelihood of access to health promotion, health prevention interventions.

The report went on to describe what “transforming education” meant, paralleling the RC mission, message, and approach, and pointing the way forward for Japanese schools:

- Increased attention to quality, relevance, and delivery of content
- Improving high-school retention and completion rates
- Increasing enrolment rates of vulnerable students: disabled, humanitarian victims
- Reducing school violence: particularly physical, psychological, sexual
- Improving access to quality promotive, preventive, curative health interventions

³³ “Adolescent mental health”. (2019, August). UNESCO. Retrieved from <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-health/mental-health/>

³⁴ “International Youth Day 2019”. (2019, August 12). WHO. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/adolescence/IYD__2019/en/

RC (AUSTRALIA) SURVEY RESULTS³⁵

Annually, all RC countries review the year's results - both the performance/production segment, but more importantly, the program's core mission-successes as reported back by the participants (students, teachers, parents) in anonymous surveys. The following is a sample summary of one of these surveys from the Australian RC event in 2006 – the same year that the RCJ was launched in Japan:

- The surveys were anonymous and were completed during the day of the event. 5201 questionnaires were returned. **2713 more than in 2005.**
- **85%** said that they spent 3 or more months rehearsing with **89%** spending 3 or more hours per week on their production outside of curriculum time.
- **12%** of respondents reported that they smoked before becoming involved in the Rock Challenge. Of those, **64%** have stopped smoking due to their involvement, and **25%** have reduced the amount they smoke.
- Of all the respondents, **13%** also reported they drank alcohol before becoming involved in the event. Of those, **89%** have stopped or reduced their alcohol intake since becoming involved in the Rock Challenge.
- **79%** of students who had used drugs before becoming involved in the Rock Challenge have now stopped or reduced their drug usage.
- Of all the respondents, **92%** felt their self-esteem and teamwork skills had both improved since they became involved in Rock Challenge.
- Of all the respondents, **11%** said they had played truant from school before. Of those **83%** have stopped playing truant due to their involvement in the Rock Challenge.
- **96%** of respondents reported that they enjoyed school more since becoming involved in the event.
- **95%** also reported they have better relationships with their teachers following their involvement.
- Of all the respondents, **95%** reported that they have made new friends through the Rock Challenge.
- **98% of respondents described the initiative as Excellent or Good** when given the choice of Excellent, Good, Average, or Poor.

The survey findings showed a consistent pattern of positive behavioural changes across all elements – tobacco, alcohol, substance usage and self-esteem, resilience factors – as in previous years of the program. The evidence of the program's success in that year was overwhelming for the continuance of the RC. It lent further weight for the RC to be a valuable educational export to regions outside English-speaking nations where it was primarily held.

³⁵ Questionnaire Summary provided to all GRC Producers. (2006, December). GRC HQ. Sydney. Australia.

RC (JAPAN) SURVEY RESULTS³⁶

The issues of tobacco, alcohol, drug usage, and child obesity in Japanese children, while a social issue, is not at the high rates as observed in RC nations such as Australia, United Kingdom, and New Zealand - where it is a chronic problem. The Japanese government's statistics and media reports on the school refuser (*toko kyohi*), non-attender (*futoko*), class collapse (*gakkyu houkai*), suicide (*jisatsu*), bullying (*ijime*), acute social withdrawal (*hikikomori*), social-interaction and communication shortfalls (KY-syndrome | *kuki ga yomenai*) and gang violence (*oyaji gari* | *homuresu atakku*) along with the ever-present problem of tobacco, alcohol, and drug-use, are crisis issues for Japanese society.

The “Youth Suicide Tsunami”, a term coined in a prominent Japanese magazine (J@pan Inc. 2006)³⁷ for expats in Japan at the time, to describe the prominence of deaths at this age, reflects the extreme-end of personal collapse in youth self-esteem and resilience. The chart below (Figure 14.) quantifies the figures for 2006 – the year of the RCJ launch.

Incidence of Problems in Schools			
Institution	Population	Problem (all age groups/junior)	Incidence
Junior Schools		Violence (in school)	31,278
Elementary	7.2m students	Violence (out of school)	4,114
Middle School	3.663m students	Bullying	23,351
High School	3.719m students	Truancy	126,212
Vocational School	791,000 students	Dropouts	81,799
Miscellaneous	178,000 students	Suicide 0-19 years (FY2003)	613
Institution		Problem (all age groups/tertiary)	Incidence
Tertiary Schools		Dropouts	133,000
Junior College	2.3m students	Sexual harassment	23,000
University	2.8m students	Suicide 19-28 years (FY2003)	3,353
Graduate School	548,000 students		
Special Training School	59,000 students		
Overseas Students (USA)	50,000 students		

Figure 14. Incidence of Problems in Schools (J@pan Inc. 2006) (Ibid).

The MEXT, in its search for innovative and effective programs to address these debilitating behaviours, had yet to evaluate the Rock Challenge project that has proven its effectiveness in these areas in schools around the world. It was evident that the RC program would be a valuable educational project in Japanese schools - as an aid in stemming self-destructive and anti-social actions; and as a tool for developing resilience and self-esteem - the absence of these latter two personality skills being at the core of youth depression and social withdrawal.

The following survey-summaries are from RCJ 2008 that brought 250+ Elementary and High School students to the stage. All students (and staff) returned their surveys, as well as some parents who added written comments to their child's survey paper. There were many duplicate-sentiments expressed. Therefore, these results are the key statements (English | 日本語):

³⁶ Questionnaire summary-responses provided to all RCJ 2008 participants. (2008, November). Tokyo. Japan.

³⁷ Dodd, J. (2006, April). *J@pan Inc.* Stemming the Suicide Tsunami. Retrieved from <https://www.japaninc.com/article.php?articleID=1487>

STUDENTS COMMENTS | 参加者の声

- Rarely are there school activities where you can have so much enjoyment. It was great to have this chance to be part of this large team.
- It really was possible to ‘achieve’ and I actually felt thrilled seeing everyone coming together and cooperating.
- By working together with people, I realized I can achieve anything.
- Creating our own idea is a new experience for me in extra-curricular activities, where usually we are told what to do.
- I achieved greater self-confidence and self-understanding through my involvement.
- I learned to listen to other people’s opinions.
- By doing this project, I learned to consider the feelings and attitudes of other students. This skill is something I want to use in my daily life in the future.
- At first, we thought fitting the Rock Challenge into our regular school year plus combining seniors and juniors together would be difficult. But it was easy!
- I was so happy that my choreography ideas were used.

-
- 今まで皆で熱中するという事が滅多になかった。「一つになる」ということを改めて知ることができてよかった。
 - 皆で協力すればどんなことでも乗り越えられる、ということを実感しました。
 - 部活と比べて、誰かの言った事をやるのではなく、自分たちで作ってところがよかった。
 - 部活では、自分の力を思う存分見てもらえないけれど、ロックチャレンジでは、自分の本当の力を人にみてもらえる、評価してもらえてうれしい。
 - 自信がついて、堂々と何かをする事ができるようになりました！
 - 人の意見に耳を傾ける事を学んだ。
 - 相手を思いやる気持ちを知り、それをこれからも役に立てていきたいと思います。
 - 部活だと先輩後輩があるので大変ですが、ロックチャレンジは学年に関係なくやりやすく楽しかったです。
 - 自分の振り付けを使ってくれてうれしかった。

PARENTS | 保護者の声

- My daughter struggles with normal class work. So this experience of working with older students who welcomed her ideas gave her a sense of achievement in an area ordinarily she never would have experienced in a school was excellent.
- My daughter has become more positive than before. Her outlook/mind has broadened too.
- It was a really good experience for students and a valuable addition to the school curriculum - which rarely gets the chance to create a large team, encourage leadership and cross-cultural exchange with English (and overseas) students.
- At first, I thought it was not possible to develop self-confidence through a public performance, but the Rock Challenge experience proved otherwise.
- I always felt my daughter was not good at finding friends. But through this Rock Challenge experience, I was pleased to see her develop deeper friendships.

-
- 机上の学習が苦手な彼女ではあるが、上級生・同級生と相談し自分のアイディアも含め、完成させたことは、教科では味わえない事だと思う。
 - (娘が) 今まで以上に明るくなりました。視野も広がりました。
 - 学校のカリキュラムでは、体験できない貴重な体験（リーダーとしてチームをまとめる事、イギリス人と交流できた事等）が出来て、本当に良かったと思います。
 - 人前で踊る事が出来ないとおもっていましたが、ロックチャレンジの経験を通し自分に自信がもてたと思います。
 - ロックチャレンジを通し、苦手な事でも友達となら頑張れるという娘の姿に成長を感じ更に友情も深まった様で嬉しく思います。

TEACHERS COMMENTS | 先生の声

- Through Rock Challenge involvement, students learned that through “cooperation” they could achieve success. They learned resilience and communication skills to solve conflicts.
- Through self-expression and the satisfaction of achievement (in Rock Challenge), a level of self-confidence was achieved by the students not ordinarily available in their school life.
- This sort of experience provides what is needed in society and the workforce (creativity, human communication skills, relationship formation etc) and cannot be offered by traditional classroom subjects.
- At first the students were passive/shy. But as they became more active and involved in the Rock Challenge its true value became evident.

- (ロックチャレンジを通し) 他の生徒達と協調して作品を完成させたこと。色々なもめ事があったが、自分の感情を出しながらも皆と話し合っ解決していく力を身につけたこと
- 自己表現していける自信と、一つの事を完成させる満足感が得られ、通常の学校生活では得られない価値があった。
- 通常の授業では経験できない事を通じて、社会に出ても必要とされる力、(創造力、責任、他者との関わり方) が養われた点が評価できる。
- はじめは受け身的でしたが、ロックチャレンジを経験していくうちに能動的になったことは価値のあることだと思います。

Of further interest were the direct English comments recorded on video at the end of the evening which encapsulate the energy of the evening as people exited the hall:

“It was a great event for the young students. I saw such happiness in their faces. It was such an entertaining night I was taken by surprise! I hope to see a step-up in the Rock Challenge Japan project where we can bring this to more Japanese children around the country. It was marvelous.”

CEO of RCJ 2008 Supporting Foundation

“Thank you for the opportunity you provided for all of the schools to do this. I know our group had a super day and without a doubt we will put it together next year, and likely rope in even more students! My wife and our two friends who came along were very much impressed and entertained. A kid's mind is pretty powerful, isn't it! Anyhow, it was an extremely worthwhile experience for myself, and I am so proud of my students. They truly did everything themselves. This kind of thing reminds me of why I became a teacher.”

International School Teacher/Producer RCJ 2008

The RCJ 2008 event judges themselves (leading print-media and television people) were also astonished as to what had been achieved by the students exclaiming, “the great air of positivity and energy that permeated their performances” and the “professional level of stagecraft exhibited by school children”. Sponsors that attended on the night expressed their pleasure at the professional running of the event as well as the good crowd and visibility of their brand-name within the event – print, electronic, displays and acknowledgements on the night. They too were impressed by the entertainment spectacle.

The exhilaration and sense of accomplishment by the students was palpable on the evening to all attendees and lasted into the subsequent months. The event day was preceded with the natural fears and nerves of performance in a large venue to mostly unknown audience. The responses by the school community demonstrated the significant impact of a child-driven performance arts project on the psyche and self-esteem of the students involved. RCJ 2009~ events drew the same responses and had the same affect.

RCJ Survey results each year were summarized and archived in the form of qualitative “comments” rather than quantitative “percentages” as in the large Australian, UK, NZ events.

DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

The writings of global troubadour Raffi Cervokian, regarded as the "most popular children's entertainer in the English-speaking world" (Washington Post)³⁸, in his Child Honouring³⁹ movement, echo the calls of UNESCO, WHO, and GRC for transformative education:

This is a "children first" approach to healing young as the key to building a humane and sustainable world. (It's not about a child-centred society where children rule, nor a facile notion of children being all things nice, and it has nothing to do with permissive parenting; none of these is desirable.) Child Honouring is a global credo for maximizing joy and reducing suffering by respecting the goodness of every human being at the beginning of life, with benefits rippling in all directions.

However, "transformation" is about "change" and moving people out of their comfort zones. Educational transformation requires a Theory of Change (ToC)⁴⁰ approach ie. determining the desired goals first, then working backwards to input the steps necessary to achieve those goals. Global health and child organizations have identified the core needs for education change. Programs such as the GRC, with proven results over many decades and in different hemispheres, has shown us that a transformation from a *conventional* model in dealing with health/social issues to a *prevention/intervention* model, quite simply, works.

Clearly evident in the survey responses from RCJ 2008 students was their gaining of a feeling of self-confidence, sense of worth, and self-understanding. What rallied them all was the experience of participating in a program relevant to youth culture that was empowering and uplifting. Their responses reflected a quantum-leap in their own self-esteem and resilience capabilities – very evident in their own words, and in those of their primary (parents) and secondary-carers (teachers). The RC-type programs point the way to addressing aberrant social behaviors such as social withdrawal, social-awkwardness, school refusal, truancy, class collapse, bullying, and suicide which are crisis-level social issues in modern Japan,

In Zielenziger (2006)⁴¹, the author states that it is "Japan's rigid, tradition-steeped society, its aversion to change, and its distrust of individuality and the expression of self are stifling economic revival, political reform, and social evolution". He further proposes that due to factors such as Japan's lowest birthrate of all industrialized countries, rising incidence of untreated cases of depression, and globally highest suicide rates, these are manifestations of this cultural rigidity. Therefore, it begs the question why aren't the nation's education departments adopting and integrating prevention/intervention programs to treat social ills?

Brian McVeigh (2002)⁴² believed that Japanese students lacked skills and motivation due to the fact that politics and business-interests controlled Japan's education system in order to produce obedient future workers rather than deliver genuine education. He postulated that in an exam-oriented and job-oriented system, children lose their motivation to learn, and the purpose of schooling becomes a conflict between what is education and what is employment.

³⁸ Lei, R. (1992, May 31). Raffi's Growing Pains. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/style/1992/05/31/raffis-growing-pains/916301da-28d1-4bbe-ba48-802661e51234/>

³⁹ Cavoukian, R. (2006). *Child honouring: How to turn this world around*. Praeger Publishers. Westport, CT.

⁴⁰ Clark, H. & Taplin, D. (2012). *Theory of change basics: A primer on theory of change*. NY. Actknowledge.

⁴¹ Zielenziger, M. (2006). *Shutting out the sun: How Japan created its own lost generation*. Vintage Books. NY.

⁴² McVeigh, B.J. (2002). *Japanese higher education as myth*. Routledge. NY.

Japan education and education reform, as in other countries, move through phases. From the 1990s to 2020 it has shifted policies from educational enlightenment (1990's *yutori kyoiku* or Relaxed Education) - an instilling a “zest for learning” - before reverting to a more educational conservative line (2000's Action Plan for Improving Academic Ability) - a re-focus on “rote learning”. Sensitive about the PISA⁴³ Test results of 2002, which showed a decline in reading, mathematics, and science scores with the *yutori kyoiku* approach (and a subsequent loss of national status on the world stage with regards Japan's previously high-ranking), the new MEXT reforms saw a return to more educational rigidity from 2012.

However, the MEXT 2012 national curriculum guidelines (*gakushu shido yoryo*) retained some of the wise decisions made in 2002 such as: elimination of Saturday classes; development of reasoning/critical analysis skills in students; and integration of experiential learning into class practice. There have also been new inclusions in the curriculum with Dance (2013) introduced as a subject into high-schools, Moral Education (2018) introduced as a subject in both elementary and high schools, and English Language (2020) as a subject scheduled for introduction in elementary schools. Recent *gakushu shido yoryo* advisories (2016)⁴⁴ address some of the recommended UNESCO educational reforms focus on “sustainable societies”.



Reported in The Japan Times (2018)⁴⁵, was the announcement of a draft of the MEXT new high school curriculum guidelines proposing the addition of comprehensive history (*rekishi sogo*), comprehensive geography (*chiri sogo*), and public affairs (*kokyo*) as new compulsory subjects (Figure 15). These will be implemented into all schools from 2022. With national curriculum revisions released every decade, it seems improbable that 2022 will see any other inclusions.

Figure 15. Standard Japanese classroom (The Japan Times, 2018.) (Ibid.)

The additional goals of providing “quality promotive, preventive, curative health interventions” (WHO, 2019. Ibid) did not feature as critical needs for reform in the 2002, 2012, and likely not in 2022, national curriculum guidelines. In 2018, when the Moral Education subject was announced by MEXT, it listed youth social problems as stemming from the impact of income-gap; financial/employment instability; and poor family communication. Apart from a revised textbook and recommending that teachers should encourage students to think for themselves and listen to opinions of others, there was little or nothing in the way of “transformative” education initiatives. In-roads into developing and launching a broad transformational education program into Japanese schools have yet to appear on the MEXT agenda. Whether due to the Japanese cultural position purported by Zielenziger and McVeigh or other root-causes, the immediate and short-term futures do not give an indication of UNESCO or WHO reforms becoming mainstream in the curriculum anytime soon.

⁴³ PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment). Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/>

⁴⁴ Curriculum Guidelines (Courses of Study) and ESD. (2016). MEXT. Japan. Retrieved from <https://www.mext.go.jp/en/unesco/title04/detail04/sdetail04/1375712.htm>

⁴⁵ “Education ministry to introduce new compulsory subjects at high schools in Japan.” (2018, February 15).

The Japan Times. Retrieved from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/02/15/national/japan-introduce-new-high-school-compulsory-subjects/#.XfWgmW5uLIU>

CONCLUSIONS

Independent research, coupled with internal research, has been conducted on the Global Rock Challenge (GRC) over its almost four-decades of operation. The findings were that this program's messages of promoting health, positive lifestyle, and creative thinking had a significant impact on its participants. The results were overwhelmingly conclusive.

The first three-year cross-sectional study of Rock Challenge (RC) students versus students not involved in the event was performed in 2003. It was conducted by researchers from the Department of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of Sydney Australia (Grunstein, R. & Nutbeam, D. (2007) (Ibid.)).

In that year, the *Australian Government: Department of Health and Ageing* commissioned their Social Research Centre⁴⁶ to investigate the impact of the RC program following the national broadcast of the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge (REC). This included conducting a telephone survey of 1,438 people aged from 12~18 years to measure overall audience response:

Perceived Personal Impact of the Program and the Commercials: Among those who reported viewing either the National or a Regional TV Special and being aware of the commercials, respondents reported that both the commercials and the program made them think about their own behaviour in regard to drinking alcohol (74%), taking drugs (67%) and smoking (58%).

Perceptions of the National Alcohol Campaign Sponsorship: All respondents were asked whether they thought that the involvement of the National Alcohol Campaign sponsorship and SmokeFree Fashion messages in the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge TV Specials was a good way to convey these messages to young people. Eighty-six per cent of respondents (representing 1,602,000 teenagers) agreed with this statement for both the National Alcohol Campaign and SmokeFree Fashion messages.

Similar research was performed in the United Kingdom by five members of the Faculty of Health and Social Care, UWE⁴⁷. Their findings, posted in the *Journal of Research in Nursing*, paralleled those of Australia, particularly the positive dynamics of developing confidence, teamwork and friendships, and new skills and experiences. Two findings, the former of great significance. and the latter of significant future opportunity and direction-of-energies were:

The excitement felt during dance rehearsals and the live performance was associated with the concept of a 'drug-free high', feeling good in the absence of drugs and alcohol, and was seen as a key benefit of the programme.

While support from teachers and families was perceived as high, difficulties were identified in the recruitment of males and students vulnerable to substance misuse and recommendations are made for improvement. The health promotion opportunities

⁴⁶ Barbir, N., Caroll, T., & Taylor, J. (2004, April). *Evaluation of the 2003 National Rock Eisteddfod Challenge TV Special and the Regional TV Specials*. Retrieved from [https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/38001C0A99C21B8CCA257BF0001F951F/\\$File/rock_2003.pdf](https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/38001C0A99C21B8CCA257BF0001F951F/$File/rock_2003.pdf)

⁴⁷ Jones, M., Kimberlee, R., et al. (2005, May 1). Implementing the Rock Challenge: Young people's perspectives on a drug-prevention and performing-arts programme. *Journal of Research in Nursing*. 10, (3). Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/174498710501000310>

for school nurses and other public health practitioners and personal, social and health education coordinators are highlighted.

Both academic research and anecdotal findings in all GRC countries reached the same conclusions with regarding the efficacy of this prevention/intervention form of youth education. RC qualitative and quantitative research results point to the need to transform education programs in order to achieve the results that governments and communities desire but have failed so far to achieve by traditional adult-driven methods.

Schools, parent groups, education systems, and governments need to re-examine in more detail the recommendations on transforming education as outlined by UNESCO and WHO, and the results of longitudinal studies of programs by organizations such as the GRC. With respect to the Japanese education system, the revised initiatives in its 2002, 2012, and soon 2022, guidelines simply do not go far enough – particularly in the revised Moral Education subject. A revamped textbook and including some diplomatic social language skills as the panacea for addressing the nation’s chronic youth social issues are impotent strategies. It is a simplistic and token-approach to dealing with complex social issues. By connecting character-development and health/social-development messages to youth culture through the arts, solving the chronic problems of unhealthy or anti-social behaviors in children are far more surmountable.

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